



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Navy Officer's Birthday Ball  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
Admiral Cecil Haney  
Saturday, 13 October 2012  
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii  
As Prepared For Delivery**

Thank you Captain Therese Craddock for that intro, but especially for being not just the emcee but also Chair for the Navy Ball Committee. Well Done!

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and especially my fellow Naval officers and all those who support us: Happy 237<sup>th</sup> birthday and Aloha!

As I have had an opportunity to meet many of you tonight, I must admit, you are all looking pretty good for being 237 years old.

It is my pleasure and honor to serve as your Commander of the Pacific Fleet and to be here to celebrate this 237<sup>th</sup> birthday.

First though, I want to acknowledge our VIPs.

I will start with extending a warm Aloha to all the spouses, family members and loved ones here tonight. Your contribution to our mission cannot be overstated. Your encouragement and support are vital to the Navy's efforts and it is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

As an example, I understand that even though destroyer *O'Kane* is underway, she is well represented here by the spouses of the *USS O'Kane*. I am so pleased to see you representing the ship tonight.

Great to have you here.

Sailors who wear the uniform today or wore it in the past, foreign dignitaries present, community leaders, and the industrial base that supports us, also welcome.

Please note, that I am the relief pitcher tonight. Captain(ret) Jerry Coffee could not be here tonight. I am sure, like me, you were looking forward to hearing from him tonight given his distinguished career. We wish him well and hope and pray for a speedy recovery.

So let me get started here.

Tonight's theme is 'Celebrating Naval Tradition'. What a great theme, given we have much to celebrate and our Navy has such a rich history and proud heritage. Over the last 237 years, our Navy started out with two merchantmen vessels that were converted into armed ships. From this humble beginning, our Navy has become the most formidable maritime force in the history of the world.

We are reminded of our history right here in Hawaii given the unique number of memorials, monuments, or museums that exist here. As Sailors here, we are unique in our ability to visualize this history every underway. In addition to the *Arizona* Memorial, just making that turn about Hospital Point creates a special meaning knowing that those heroes on the battleship *Nevada* were there December 7, 1941. But our Navy history did not start with December 7, 1941. Brave Sailors contributed to that legacy ever since October 13, 1775.

Only a few short decades after winning our independence, our Navy once again defended our Nation against the British in the War of 1812, a war that many historians call our second war of independence. This year we have been busy with numerous activities to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War of 1812.

And, as we have gone from sailing ships to ships powered by diesels, gas turbines, or nuclear propulsion, we have had to adapt. As we have moved forward with all types of advanced technology, today's Navy is even moving at flank plus speed given our cyber warriors and Tenth Fleet. From communication satellite ops in space and of course ballistic missile defense, all the way to the depths of the oceans in our submarines.

Talk about changes; on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, Chief of Naval Operations, ADM Greenert, and others went to Detroit to participate in the War of 1812 commemoration. There on the Detroit River is the *Brig Niagara* that played an important role during that war. This wooden hulled brig served as the relief flagship for Oliver Hazard Perry in the Battle of Lake Erie.

Can you imagine sailing on the Flagship *Niagara* then? When we might think about complaining about the size of our bunks or cramped living spaces, can you even imagine the creature comforts on that warship?

But those Flag Ship *Niagara* Sailors are part of our heritage. Given what they had at the time, they are of the same mold of our Sailors today – Bold, Innovative People, that took the fight to the enemy.

We know that the true strength and power of our Navy isn't in the technologically advanced equipment or weapons. Our strength lies in our people; the same unique, pioneering and

adventurous type of people that started this business 237 years ago and the same caliber of people gathered in this room tonight. Each of you are what makes our Navy great and you have been making it great for more than two centuries, how's that for tradition?

So, tonight, let me just give you a glimpse of that, through the life of the individual who would have been our guest speaker – Captain (ret) Jerry Coffee.

Captain Coffee didn't just live in historic times, he made history. One of the most significant events in the Cold War was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962; a crisis that involved our Navy in a big way, considering the quarantine or blockade that went into effect.

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest our Nation came to a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union. During this time, Captain Coffee played a storied role. If you have seen the movie "Thirteen Days" with Kevin Costner, you will recall the scene where the F-8 'Crusader' reconnaissance planes were flown over Cuba to take the pictures of the construction sites for the nuclear missile silos. Yes, Captain Coffee actually did that.

Because of his efforts, the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson, was able to make his case, using those photos, to the United Nations Security Council. That exposure was significant in having the Soviets and our Nation step back from the brink. Can you imagine being part of the effort to bring this crisis to a peaceful conclusion? What a proud Navy legacy.

Tomorrow will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of that 13-day standoff. It was because of people like Jerry Coffee that we are able to talk about it today.

Jerry also fought in Vietnam, a few years later. In February 1966, while flying his RA5-C 'Vigilante' on a reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam, his aircraft was shot down and he was forced to eject. He landed safely, but was immediately captured. There he became one of the first prisoners of war and spent most of his internment in the Hanoi Hilton.

I can assure you his accommodations were nothing like those here at the Hawaii Hilton. There his routine consisted of day in and day out torture and abuse. He was a prisoner of war for seven long years before he was finally expatriated back to the U.S. What a tremendous legacy Captain Coffee has left us.

The history of our Nation isn't something that happened before you were born. History is happening all around us, and you're helping write it today. As each of you know from experience, we live in an uncertain world. We work hard to prevent surprise, but when we are surprised, we are trained to respond.

It is interesting looking at the changes of how Hollywood depicts the Navy today. “Thirteen Days” was a docudrama reminding us of our maritime history during the Cold War. Many people across the country today are learning about the Navy on the screen as they see the Battleship *Missouri* triumphantly departing Pearl Harbor on her way out to fight aliens in the movie “Battleship”. And then there is “Last Resort”, but I will not go there.

Having been out and about in our theater this year, a lot, I find the real day to day business quite reflective of our history and also of our opportunities as we sail into this uncertain future.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Greenert’s three tenets, outlined in his Sailing Directions, are most appropriate-Warfighting first, Operate Forward, and to Be Ready. These tenets are critically important today as we work to address the challenges here in the Pacific and the world. Our global Navy is out and about in a big way, hard at work as we continue the proud tradition of defending America, promoting our National interests around the world, deterring conflict, and if deterrence fails, taking the fight to the enemy-and winning. Our teams are doing just that today, as we celebrate here.

For example, we just completed an exercise called Valiant Shield 2012 that involved the *George Washington* Strike Group and dual carrier strike group operations involving the *George Washington* and the *John C. Stennis* Strike Groups aggregating tremendous combat capability.

I know *Chung-Hoon* and *Chafee* were a part of that exercise. Thank you for your work there. Also *Benfold*, are you in the audience?

The USS *Peleliu* and USS *Bonhomme Richard* Amphibious Ready Groups are conducting deployment operations. USS *Vandegrift* is a San Diego warship deployed with an HSL-37 helicopter detachment.

From Hawaii, the submarines *Greeneville*, *Olympia*, *Hawaii*, and *La Jolla* are currently deployed, along with surface ships *Paul Hamilton*, *Reuben James* and as mentioned, *O’Kane*. Not Hollywood, but the real deal, standing the watch.

That’s our all volunteer force serving boldly about the globe, not just on ships, submarines, and aircraft, but on land, in harm’s way, its warriors from these communities, as well as the SEALs, Seabees, intelligence and medical professionals, its chaplains, and even lawyers. All part of our unique capability, motivated to continue to build on the legacy of the past.

As I have been out and about in the Pacific Theater lately, I have had the opportunity to visit some of the historic sites and memorials of battles fought during WWII as we commemorate their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. One of my most memorable trips was to Midway Atoll to commemorate

the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our victory at the Battle of Midway. It was that battle that was the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

I've also visited the Solomon Islands, where I took part in a ceremony for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Guadalcanal. It was there that we fought side by side with our Allies through three major land battles, seven naval battles and nearly constant, day in and day out aerial battles, before achieving victory.

I've visited Tarawa, Palau, and Peleliu as well. During each of these trips I was humbled by the sacrifice of so many of our forefathers. For me though, it was not just the historic battle sites that piqued my passion, but meeting the survivors, those brave veterans that participated in those battles.

It truly hits me right here as I visit with those survivors still with us today, and I listen to their stories, I hear the emotion in their voice, and I see the tears in their eyes, as they recount how they fought, sacrificed and struggled to win. Those bold and brave Sailors carried on our Navy tradition in their actions and their deeds and they made history in doing so.

It was 12 years ago yesterday when the *USS Cole* was attacked and we remembered the loss of our 17 Sailors as a result of that attack. But I also remember the heroic efforts of the ship's crew as they saved their ship and took care of their own wounded. It was just over 11 years ago that we saw our own homeland attacked and our Nation responded in what would become Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

For many in this room, you have spent your entire career at war. Some of you have gone ashore in foreign lands, 'in country', as you carried on the Navy legacy ashore and showed the versatility of our Navy team.

I salute each of you for your valuable contribution to our proud Navy heritage.

No matter what the challenge, the men and women, of our great Navy are ready and able to respond and we will continue to respond with the full range of military options along with our Joint Military Forces. Whether it is assisting in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, deterrence operations, or high end warfighting, our Navy is always ready.

For more than 200 years our Navy has been successful because of our people. Each and every one of you who serve today are an invaluable member of a special team working and winning in one of the most challenging eras in our Nation's history and I am genuinely grateful for your significant contributions as you serve. So let me end this with us shifting colors; let's get the rest of the birthday party underway.

Thanks to each of you for your service and for the families, thank you for your dedication and support. I wish each and every one of you a very Happy Birthday!

May God bless our Nation, our Navy and each of you who serve.  
Mahalo.